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Bernhard C. Straube, Schatzmeister.	

**A Letter by the U. S. Commissioner of Education,  
Mr. F. P. Claxton, on the Teaching of  
German in American Schools.**

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON

June 22, 1917.

Mr. W. S. Covert, Principal South Side High School,  
Rockville Centre, Long Island, New York.

Dear Sir:—

I do not think our present relations with the German Empire should affect in any way the policy of the schools in the United States in regard to teaching the German language.

The United States is now at war with the Imperial Government of Germany and not with the German language or German literature. The President has tried to make it plain to all the people that we are not at war with the people of Germany as a people and that we have in our

hearts no hatred or bitterness toward them. When the war is over we expect to be their friends again and our commercial and political relations will be re-established. Indeed we shall probably have much more intercourse with the German people than ever before, as we shall have with most of the nations of the world. The great German republic may become one of the leading nations for the preservation of the peace of the world. For practical, industrial and commercial purposes we shall need a knowledge of the German language more than we have needed in the past. We should remember also that there are many millions of German speaking people outside of Germany and the number of such persons will probably increase rapidly after the war regardless of the way in which the war may end. Some years ago we were at war with Spain, and more recently we were almost at war with Mexico whose people speak the Spanish language. The need of a knowledge of the Spanish language for commercial and industrial uses has been greatly increased.

The culture value of the German language and literature and the writings of Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and a host of other poets and novelists, historians and essayists remain the same as they were before the war, and it is too great for us to lose out of our life, national and individual. The value of the scientific and technical writings of the German people will no doubt continue to increase. To rob ourselves of the ability to profit by them would be very foolish. The kinship between the English and the German languages is the same as it was before the war, and the value of a knowledge of the history and philosophy of the German language for an understanding of English remains the same.

Last of all, we cannot as a people afford to put ourselves in the attitude of regarding as evil everything about any people with whom we may happen to be at war. We cannot afford to assume this attitude toward the German people simply because they happen now to be under the control of an autocratic militaristic government with purposes and aims that have brought us into conflict with it. The fewer hatreds and antagonisms that get themselves embodied in institutions and policies the better it will be for us when the days of peace return. We can easily see how this has been true of our times of war with England, Mexico and Spain, and among ourselves.

I sincerely hope that school officers and teachers everywhere will take the broad and sane view of this subject. To do so can, I believe, in no way be interpreted as a lack of loyalty to the United States, nor can failure to do so in any way strengthen our position in the war or enable us to bring it to a successful end more quickly.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) **P. P. Claxton.**